

BATES GOAL EARNS FIRST HOME WIN

By Argus

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Clapton 1

IT was a winkle to a jellied eel that Wycombe Wanderers' experimental swop-about team would score their first Isthmian home win of the season against bottom-of-the-league Clapton on Saturday and win they did—but only after the East Enders, young as they were, had provided their share of traditional Clapton shocks.

Clapton—who always surpass their normal league form at Loakes Park—equalised an orphan Cliff Trott first half goal after the interval and looked the faster side on a rain-drenched treacherous pitch which produced spectacular skids and miskicks.

Fortunately for the Wanderers, Paul Bates swooped through in the 68th minute, sent pivot Ken Pope thrashing the wrong way like a Keystone Cop and keeping his own balance miraculously on the green slime, calmly eluded goalkeeper McAlpine for the winner.

Few of the huddled dejected-looking spectators would have grumbled at a draw. Apart from the troubles which are afflicting both clubs at the moment, the wretched conditions made good soccer an impossibility.

HEADLONG SAVES

Both teams battled energetically and if there was very little skill or accurate shooting on display there were certainly thrills and spills at both ends.

Rival goalkeepers — Ken Brown of Wycombe and Eddie McAlpine of Clapton — knew they had been in a dogfight. They both made headlong saves after defenders had slithered into difficulty in front of them.

Giving a thrusting shoot-on-sight forward, the Wanderers would have won much more easily. Clapton's defence often looked in bad shape as Wycombe cut through but the old killer punch is still missing, Johnny Weaver, who filled the inside-left position when R.A.F. hope Jimmy Holmes failed to appear, was astray with his shooting and Cliff Trott had an uninspired game.

Bates, who wandered freely, was the liveliest Wycombe forward but Steve Hyde, who did not see so much of the ball, again showed a flair for adroit control and distribution

Wycombe's reshuffled defence—which included Dennis Atkins and Dave Worley at full back and John Beck at left-half—had inevitable adventures and escapes but survived surprisingly well. Both Atkins and Worley defended stubbornly.

Trott's 18th minute opening goal—the only first-half score—was tinged with luck. Jack Tomlin's centre hit a Clapton defender and rebounded to the feet of the unmarked inside-right. McAlpine stood no chance but he saved a certain goal soon afterwards when he smothered Weaver's first-time effort.

Clapton scored their fifth goal in eight games in the 57th minute when tireless veteran right-back Lawrie Wilkinson dropped a splendid centre on Lione's head.

The game was unexpectedly held up for several minutes after Bates had plunged into the back of the net, hurt himself and wrecked the netting support. After prolonged repairs play resumed and Bates atoned by testing the rigging with the winning goal.

WYCOMBE CAN THANK BATES

Wycombe 2 Clapton 1

WYCOMBE WANDERERS scored their first Isthmian League home win of the season against lowly placed Clapton yesterday, but there was little in their display to cheer supporters. Clapton, quicker on the ball, had as much of the play as their opponents in a game marred by heavy rain.

Wycombe dropped their club captain John Bartholomew, and a new defence stood up well to fierce attacks by an energetic Clapton front line in which inside left Norcott was the principal schemer.

The Clapton youngsters were faster and generally smoother in their forward play than Wanderers, who failed to achieve effective understanding. Although wingers Hyde and Tomlin featured in several good moves, usually only Bates was in position to challenge the Clapton defence.

Wycombe were lucky to be a goal ahead at the interval after Trott had taken advantage of a defensive error in the 18th minute to convert a pass from Tomlin.

The forwards tried to beat the weather conditions by shooting at every opportunity, and this brought out some smart goalkeeping by Brown, of Wycombe, and McAlpine, of Clapton, but it was no more than Clapton deserved when Lione beat Brown 12 minutes after the interval.

In the tussle which followed only Bates looked likely to score for Wycombe and his winner, from another solo move, came just after play had been held up for eight minutes for repairs to the goal-netting support after the centre forward had been injured when he ran headlong into it.